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SOME UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR IDEAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT...AS THEY SEE IT.

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A DOCTORAL STUDY OF THE OPINIONS OF 700 STUDENTS IN SIX CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES CONCERNING THE IDEAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT WAS REPLICATED BY THE STUDY SKILLS CENTER OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF LOS ANGELES IN 1966-67 AS PART OF AN EVALUATION OF STUDENT STUDY HABITS AND ATTITUDES. IN THIS INTERIM REPORT, THE RESPONSES OF 109 NONRESIDENT AND 105 RESIDENT MALE FRESHMEN TO THE 27 ITEMS OF THE 100-ITEM OPINIONNAIRE (USED IN BOTH STUDIES), DEALING WITH SEVEN STUDY SPACE PROBLEMS, WERE ANALYZED. STUDENT PREFERENCES FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE DISCUSSED--(1) DECOR IN STUDY AREA, (2) TYPE OF FURNITURE MOST SUITABLE FOR STUDYING, (3) ACCESSIBILITY OF STUDY MATERIALS, (4) SMOKING PRIVILEGES, (5) SIZE OF ROOM OR STUDY AREA, (6) AMOUNT OF PRIVACY NEEDED, AND (7) BEST TIME OF DAY FOR STUDYING. FIVE TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION, BASED ON THE FRESHMAN DATA, ARE LISTED. COMPLETE DATA FOR ALL FOUR UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE PUBLISHED AT A LATER DATE. REFERENCES ARE GIVEN. (LS)

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SOME UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR IDEAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT... AS THEY SEE IT!

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Introduction. Late in 1965, the Community College Planning Center at Stanford University sent to selected college and university Student Personnel Services officers a report on student study facilities entitled A Study On Studying (3). This 56 page booklet reports the results of a doctoral dissertation by John Condon (1) in which he studied some 700 students at six California community colleges to determine how they felt about study facilities. Data for the study was compiled from a 100 item opinionnaire that asked a student to rate various features of study places on a seven point scale from extremely desirable to neutral to extremely undesirable. Among the features of ideal study space that students were asked to respond to were the following: privacy, group study, plain or fancy decor, size of study areas, smoking and ventilation, noise, and accessibility to educational activities and aids. In addition to questions

dealing with preferences in study facilities, students were asked these two questions: 1) where do you do most of your studying now? and 2) why do you study there rather than somewhere else?

In the Condon report on students' primary study location and reasons for their choice, 76.6 per cent indicated that they studied at home, 10.1 per cent in the college library, 5.4 per cent in classroom or other campus area, 3.4 per cent in automobiles, and 4.5 per cent in other places. Leading the list of reasons for their choice of study location were the following in order of their frequency of response: 1) quiet, 2) privacy, 3) accessibility to educational aids, 4) convenience of the location, and 5) type of furnishings in the study space.

Because Loyola was conducting an intensive institutional survey, the Study Skills Center decided to replicate the Condon study as part of its evaluation of student study habits and attitudes. With the adoption in the fall of 1967 of a quarter plan for the University, there would be an increasing emphasis on independent study and a real need to evaluate existing conditions and facilities for such independent study. As Dearing points out in a recent book on new developments in higher education (2), when education shifts the emphasis from classroom-centered instruction to independent study, there is a need for more individual study space. The results of this study would provide answers to correct current university problems of student study space and recommendations for the development of ideal study areas in future planning of campus facilities.

Permission was granted by the Stanford University Community College Planning Center and research funds were supplied by the Loyola University Research Committee so that the Study Skills Center could begin its local survey.

Data Analysis. For this interim report, data has been analyzed for 109 non-resident and 105 resident freshmen. Data for the other three classes will be included in the final report to be completed in the spring of 1967. Unlike the Condon study in which the data represented responses of students who were male and female, non-resident, full and part time, school age and adult, day and evening of six community colleges; this replication deals only with full time resident and non-resident male undergraduates of Loyola University.

The data for this report, drawn from 27 items of the 100-item opinionnaire, represents an analysis of the following seven study space problems: 1) decor, 2) furniture, 3) accessibility of materials, 4) smoking, 5) size, 6) privacy, and 7) time of studying.

The problem of decor, plain or fancy, is apparently more real to the interior decorator than to the student. Students were not overly concerned as to whether their study space should be elaborate or plain. The tendency was to choose the latter. For 74 per cent of the respondents, a study table or desk was preferred for most studying; an additional 12 per cent had no preference. As to chair hardness or softness, 53 per cent preferred a soft chair and an additional 21 per cent rated this item neutral. As might be expected, 99 per cent of the respondents, resident and non-resident,

wanted to have study materials accessible to their study space. For the non-resident who studies on campus, this suggests the need for independent study centers or carrels. When asked to choose between an area where smoking is permitted and one where it is forbidden, 42 per cent found its prohibition desirable, 33 per cent were neutral, and 25 per cent found its prohibition undesirable. When students were asked to select ideal study space size, only 20 per cent felt that a large space, such as a main reading room in a library, or a dining hall, or an auditorium, was desirable. Of the same respondents, nearly 54 per cent thought it desirable to study in a moderately large space such as the size of a small classroom or a living room. Of the same respondents, 76 per cent opted for a small space such as a small bedroom or a carrel. When students were asked to choose whether they preferred studying alone, with two or three others, with about seven others, with about twenty others, or with more than 100 other persons also studying, 66 per cent preferred absolute privacy. Of the same respondents, 51 per cent indicated that studying where there were two or three others was also desirable. On a similar question involving privacy while studying, 78 per cent thought it desirable, 14 per cent expressed no preference, and 8 per cent felt it to be somewhat undesirable. Students indicated their preference for study hours in the following order: 1) Between dinner and 10:00 P.M., 2)Between lunch and dinner, 3) Between 10:00 P.M. and midnight, 4) Between morning classes, and 5) Before breakfast.

To the question that asked where they did most of their studying now, 88 per cent of the residents and 62 per cent of the non-residents responded that they studied in their rooms. The remaining 12 per cent of the residents and 30 per cent of the non-residents responded that they studied either in the campus library or in empty classrooms. An additional 8 per cent of the non-residents indicated that they studied wherever they could - in the public library, at a friend's house, or in their cars.

Students who chose to study in their own rooms indicated four major reasons for this choice: 1) convenience, 2) accessibility of study material, 3) privacy, and 4) quiet.

To a final question that asked students to write in their complaints about study environment on campus, 37 per cent of the non-resident respondents indicated that they had no complaints, 30 per cent felt that there were not enough study areas on campus, 25 per cent directed their complaints to such library conditions as ventilation, noise, and inadequate open hours, and 8 per cent complained of inadequate storage locker facilities and smoking-reading rooms.

The greatest number of complaints from residents dealt with their own study environment. For 70 per cent, both the lack of quiet and inadequate room lighting for study were deterrents to study. Only 5 per cent stated that they had no complaints. The remainder of resident complaints dealt with the library, inadequate group study facilities, and a lack of outdoor study spaces.

Tentative recommendations. With only 25 per cent of the data analyzed, no conclusions or definite recommendations can be made. However, certain administrative reactions to ameliorate the existing

study environment suggest themselves immediately: 1) a survey of all existing study space, 2) a survey of all campus areas that are now not study spaces but might become quite desirable when adequate lighting and furniture is added, 3) a check of study areas, particularly of resident rooms, to determine adequacy of illumination for reading tasks, 4) a trial extension of library hours until midnight, and 5) a survey of suitable locations for outdoor study space. To the administrator, such reactions mean an expenditure of time, effort, and money. For students, such administrative reactions mean a better study environment - a study environment that students see as ideal.

References

1. A Study on Studying. A report from the Community College Planning Center, School Planning Laboratory. Palo Alto, California: School of Education, Stanford University, 1965. Pp. 56.

2. Condon, John. Study Habits and Perceptions of Desirable Study Space by California Community College Students. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1966.)

3. Dearing, Bruce. "The Student on His Own: Independent Study" in Higher Education: Some Newer Developments, edited by Samuel Boskin. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965. Pp. 49-77.